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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI OPPOSES 2010 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

Summary

[¶1.](#) (U) MDC anti-Senate faction leader Morgan Tsvangirai at a press conference at MDC headquarters vowed to resist a postponement of the 2008 presidential election until 2010. Tsvangirai also said that constitutional reform should

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precede elections and allowed that negotiations on reform among stakeholders could result in the election slipping beyond 2008. On the issue of MDC reunification, he said this would be "ideal," but the pro-Senate faction had not indicated a willingness to reunify. End Summary.

Opposition to 2010 elections

[¶2.](#) (U) Tsvangirai told the press that the MDC would do everything possible to assure that presidential elections take place in 2008. He further argued that elections should take place under a new constitution to ensure they are fair. Tsvangirai added that the MDC will work with the Save

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Zimbabwe Coalition to negotiate a new constitution with all stakeholders.

[¶3.](#) (U) Although short on specifics, Tsvangirai said mass action is necessary and that all Zimbabweans must sacrifice. Noting increasingly difficult times, he stated that "the time

to act is now. Our call for elections in 2008 is out of the realization that the national crisis cannot be extended by another day...."

¶4. (U) As part of the MDC strategy, Tsvangirai said the MDC would conduct an international public relations campaign directed at SADC , the AU, and the UN to create additional international pressure on the regime.

¶4. (C) Tsvangirai told polecon chief after the press conference that constitutional reform is more of a priority than elections. If negotiations for such reform are underway in 2008, he would support a postponement of 2008 elections until a new constitution is in place. (N.B. This has been Tsvangirai,s position for some time. He has argued that

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there must be a new constitution and a transitional government of unity in place prior to elections to ensure that they are free and fair.)

On reunification

¶5. (C) Asked by the press about prospects for reunification, Tsvangirai said "it takes two to tango." He said party unity

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would be "ideal," but that more important than unity of individuals is unity of purpose. When polecon chief suggested to him that reunification at this time could provide momentum to the opposition, he agreed, but said the pro-Senate faction is resisting. He dismissed pro-Senate faction president Arthur Mutambara (whom he has not seen since July) as a "figurehead," and said the main obstacle is pro-Senate secretary-general Welshman Ncube.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Tsvangirai and the MDC have talked for some time, without results, of mass mobilization. Mugabe,s apparent intention to remain in power and postpone elections until 2010 presents another potential rallying point. This is particularly true as more and more Zimbabweans, including many ZANU-PF members, are coming to the realization that political change at the top is necessary to prevent a complete economic implosion.

DELL